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EUSA-AP 2015 Annual Conference

Theme: “Is the EU Still a Model for Asia-Pacific Regional Integration?” and “The EU as a Development Actor and Possibilities for Cooperation”

The European Union Studies Association of Asia-Pacific held its 2015 annual conference at Korea University on 11th – 12th of June. About 50 participants were presented their research paper in the context of EU and AP-related issues with a purpose to develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of the relationships. This conference consists of four presentations in each session during two days.

Opening Remarks and Keynote Speech

The opening remarks of the conference was presented by Professor Sung-Hoon Park as President of EUSA-AP and Dr. Il Hounng Lee as President of KIEP, followed by welcoming remarks by Professor Namho Lee (Executive Vice President of Korea University), H.E. Tomasz Kozlowski (Ambassador of the EU to ROK), Dr. Deok-Ryong Yoon (President EUSA-Korea), and Professor Jai-Won Ryou (President of CIES).

The keynote speech afterwards was presented by Professor Cae-One Kim as Founding President of EUSA Asia-Pacific and Professor Emeritus of Seoul National University. It discussed the conditions of the multilateral FTAs under negotiation for the Asia-Pacific region to progressively move towards market integration. The European Union as we all know, has been through serious crisis and able to overcome in its history. There were two moments for the EU which endangered the EU’s existence; the first one was a dispute on agricultural subsidiary in 1967 under the agenda of Common Agricultural Policy, and the second was the financial crisis of southern European countries caused of sovereign debts. However, the EU successfully went through it and achieved their goal in regional economic integration. The member states are obliged to cooperate, harmonize, and coordinate their policies with each other so that they will have only one single regional market which should be beneficial for all the member states, and the main reason why the EU achieved this integrative process is because they have accepted the restriction to their sovereignty so that they can constructed ‘one Europe’ with political and economical stability. The EU has become a role model for economic integration in Asia-Pacific, but it is not easy to construct regional integration because sometimes conflicting standpoints among countries can lead us to choose different paths to follow European model of integration. A country should respect other countries’ sovereignty and progressively move forward to advance the common interest in the region by promoting trade liberalization using multilateral FTA in Asia-Pacific region.

The special roundtable discussion then was followed with the topic “Major Issues and the Future Fate of the EU and the Eurozone” presented by Dr. Il Hounng Lee, H.E. Tomasz

Kozłowski, H.E. Aingéal O'Donoghue (Ambassador of Ireland to ROK), H.E. Chang-Beom Kim (Former Ambassador of ROK to the EU), Professor Sung-Hoon Park, and Professor Ding Chun of Fudan University, China. The Eurozone crisis, three years ago, was about to make the EU collapsed but they have successfully managed those difficulties. From the beginning, the EU integration project has its aim to motivate and to achieve people's will by constructed "one Europe". People believe that being the part of the EU will help their country to develop better in every aspect, especially economy and political aspect through cooperation. The speakers also mentioned that the EU has four challenges which are: the collapsed of the EU if they are not able to solve Eurozone issue, the peaceful border of the EU because sometimes certain borders has conflicts, globalization or digitalization, and level of confidence. However, many people said and agreed that the EU now is better than it has been since the crisis in 2008, and their member states also realized that the existence of the EU is important for their security and state's development.

"Model Comparison and Labour Mobility"

The EU-ASEAN relations about cooperation on migration started from 1996 Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM Conference) of the Directors-General of Immigration and Management of Migratory Flows which followed by annual conferences started in 2003. However in ASEAN, are still many of low skilled labour and they are doing a migration intra ASEAN for example to and from Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam, while the skilled labour is only 5% among temporary workers in 2000-2001. ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) 2015 has a purpose to achieve a regional integration with free movement of goods, services, investment, skilled labour, and free flow of capital. Forming a single market is about merging together the national market into one single regional market, and by doing so ASEAN will get a benefit of integrated economy. ASEAN can look at EU-style but it might not be feasible enough for AEC at its current stage so what ASEAN should do is to learn some lessons from EU as EU provides a reference point of what needs to be done to ensure effective labour mobility.

"EU and ASEAN Compared"

ASEAN leaders agreed to deepen the regional economic integration by establishing ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 in purpose to enhancing regional integration with economic dependence. On the other hand, European integration has been ongoing policy for decades under purposes of peaceful coexistence, cooperation, and development. Both ASEAN and EU have different backgrounds but their purpose is the same which is to achieve a regional economic integration. Even both organizations have no relevance of integration model but ASEAN is planning to learn from EU about how to deal with political-economic issues and strengthen authority to better effectiveness in transnational issues.

“EU Development Policy and Cooperation with Partners”

The EU is developed better since their experience of the crisis in 2008 which made their existence also became better in the world's eyes. Nowadays, they are having a great cooperation and partnership with other countries and institutions, for instance countries within Asia-Pacific region such as Japan. The EU and Japan have a long history of support for international development projects, mainly focused to give their effort in extreme poverty, reduce child mortality, combat HIV virus, malaria, and other diseases, and to ensure environmental sustainability as what already stated in the United Nations Millennium Declaration 2000. Both countries are considered to envision this global development agenda by enhancing their cooperation, which one of it achieved through humanitarian agencies between EuropeAid and JICA. Besides that, New Zealand also has a good cooperation with the EU not only as a trade partner but also in the context of economical and political relationship. The main concerns include climate change, security and development in Asia-Pacific, promotion of human rights, and openness of world trade. Both countries also agreed to help one another's position in the international affairs.

“Competition Policy and Economic Integration”

The EU competition law and policy are important mechanisms in creating economic integration through the protection and promotion of market competition which also can be used as an example for other regions who want to achieve an economic integration and create liberalization of trade among its members through one single regional market, for instance ASEAN. However, some experts said that the EU model is not perfectly suitable for ASEAN because both of them have different backgrounds, so further discussion is needed to determine whether the EU model can be fully applied in the case of ASEAN or not, and in the end it would help to identify what ASEAN has to develop on its competition policy in achieving their common goal which is ASEAN economic integration.

“EU's External Relations”

As what already explained in the previous session, the EU is growing better since they experienced a crisis around 2008. The EU today has maintaining good relations with other states, as they are considered as one of the most powerful region who successfully achieved economic integration and formed a single regional market. ASEAN is one of the regions that also have a purpose to create economic integration and market liberalization, besides that Japan and the U.S. also have close relations with the EU as they often establish cooperation in particular issues as one of the steps in achieving national interests of both parties. Moreover, the involvement of the European Parliament on EU's trade policy helps the EU to expand its relations with others, and expected to have much larger partner than the EU ever negotiated, for instance other countries and various interest groups include trade associations and non-governmental organizations.